

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 EB-08 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 COME-00 TRSE-00 MC-02 ACDA-07 AID-05
L-03 OMB-01 IGA-02 /070 W
-----271206Z 064239 /15
R 270902Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8811
INFO DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0182

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PDIP, EINV, MA, US
SUBJECT: PURCHASE OF HERCULES AIRCRAFT

REFS: (A) STATE 016929, (B) 76 TANANARIVE 1792

1. DATT'S CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTRY SEC-GEN JAN 17 RESULTED FROM FORMER'S TELEPHONE CALL TO ARRANGE MEETING FOR LOCKHEED REP PUTNAM. SEC-GEN ASKED DATT TO SEE HIM, NOT INDICATING WHAT HE WANTED TO DISCUSS. (OVER PAST FEW MONTHS DATT HAS DEVELOPED SEC-GEN AS VALUED CONTACT, BUT HE HAS REFRAINED FROM DISCUSSION WITH SEC-GEN OF HERCULES' PURCHASE.) WHEN DATT PAID VISIT AND SEC-GEN BEGAN TO DISCUSS INTRICACY OF GDRM EFFORTS TO PURCHASE THE AIRCRAFT, DATT FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO WITHDRAW. HOWEVER, HE SERVED ONLY AS LISTENER.

2. AS INDICATED REF B, EMBASSY HAS TAKEN PASSIVE ROLE IN CONTACT BETWEEN LOCKHEED AND GDRM OFFICIALS. THIS CONSISTS EXCLUSIVELY OF MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS AND OCCASIONALLY SERVING AS INTERPRETER. WE HAVE FROM THE OUTSET BEEN SKEPTICAL OF GDRM'S MOTIVES RE THIS PURCHASE, AND WE HAVE SEVERAL TIMES BROUGHT OUR SKEPTICISM TO THE ATTENTION OF THE DEPARTMENT. AS NOTED EARLIER, I HAVE INSTRUCTED DATT TO AVOID ANY ROLE WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS CONFIDENTIAL

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ENDORSEMENT OF THE PURCHASE, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, AS DISCOURAGEMENT OF THE PURCHASE. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW OCCASIONS ON WHICH DATT WITHDREW FROM ROLE OF INTERPRETER WHEN IT APPEARED THAT LOCKHEED AND GDRM OFFICIALS WERE NOT ON SAME WAVELENGTH AND LOOKED TO DATT TO RECONCILE THE DIFFERENCES.

3. IN OUR VIEW, PARA 2 REF B IS STILL OPERATIVE. I AGREE WHOLEHEARTEDLY THAT IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE, PER REF A, FOR DATT TO BE TAKING ACTIVE ROLE IN THIS TRANS-ACTION. DATT AND I HAVE DISCUSSED HIS ROLE PRIOR TO AND FOLLOWING EACH AND EVERY SESSION BETWEEN LOCKHEED AND GDRM IN WHICH HE HAS PARTICIPATED. THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT HE HAS TAKEN ONLY PASSIVE ROLE AS INTERPRETER IN THIS MATTER, AND, THEREFORE, I BELIEVE DEPARTMENT HAS UNFAIRLY CHARACTERIZED DATT'S ROLE AS "ACTIVE".

4. REVIEW OF OUR CABLES WILL CLEARLY SHOW THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO LOCKHEED CONTACTS WITH ANY OFFICIALS OTHER THAN MINDEF OFFICIALS, AS WE ALERTED DEPARTMENT WHEN WE FIRST EXPRESSED OUR SKEPTICISM OVER GDRM PURCHASE. IN VIEW OF LAST PHRASE PARA 2 REF A, DOES DEPARTMENT DESIRE THAT DATT CEASE FUNCTIONING AS INTERPRETER WHEN CALL UPON? (INCIDENTALLY, LOCKHEED REPTS PUTNAM AND PANTER DEPARTED TANANARIVE JAN 24 FOR MAURITIUS AS PLOY TO GET SOME MOVEMENT OUT OF GDRM. WE ONLY WISH THEY HAD BEEN DISCOURAGED FROM COMING IN EARLY JANUARY IN FIRST PLACE, AS WE HAD SUGGESTED.) SHEINBAUM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT, AIRCRAFT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TANANA00182
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770029-0802
Format: TEL
From: TANANARIVE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770111/aaaaajgd.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d1acb5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 16929, 76 TANANARIVE 1792
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3479474
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PURCHASE OF HERCULES AIRCRAFT
TAGS: PDIP, EINV, EAIR, MA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d1acb5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009